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### Intensification and Intimacy

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SUZANNE EWING

# INTENSIFICATION AND INTIMACY: An Examination of Charles and Ray Eames's Film, *Blacktop: A Story of the Washing of a School Play Yard* (1952)

Through a close reading of *Blacktop: A Story of the Washing of a School Play Yard* (1952), this paper aims, like the film, to suggest an urbanism of heightened sensation. An everyday material and action is intensified through a combination of staged and found circumstance. Intimacy is evoked through manipulation of visual and aural components of the cinematography. Close attention to the film reveals strategies for flattening, heightening and overlay that enable the imagination to shift temporally and materially between the solidified wash and ambiguous urbanity of 1950s asphalt to the particular qualities of often overlooked neighbourhood spaces, offering potential escape from mundanity.



## Introduction: Intensification and Intimacy

In the sun the threads of water fanning  
from the showers glisten, the jets of the  
taps, the spurts, the splashes, the  
sponges' suds.<sup>1</sup>

In this description, Italo Calvino extends a  
material metaphor for the moving water he is  
describing in words. The "threads" imply both a  
fragility and a practical strength: a potential to  
be sewn together to weave into some greater  
fabric, but also to break and to lose tensility. In  
Charles and Ray Eames's filmic choreography  
of soapy water washing on the asphalt surface  
of a schoolyard in Los Angeles, there is also a  
drawing attention to material qualities, overlaid  
with the contrapuntal musical structure of  
Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, a registration of  
strength of flow and simultaneous transience.  
This 11 minute film uses cinematic devices to  
create oscillating ambiguities of scale, fluctua-  
tions in flattening and heightening of surface  
(asphalt) and subject (soapy water) in relation  
to the overlaid musical score, to suggest a new,  
more intense understanding of an everyday  
urban material and event. This intensification of  
the visual sense to provoke connotations of the  
temperature and texture of air, water, found  
objects and existing materials in the schoolyard  
is augmented by a playing with the aural sense  
which suggests both particular micro-narratives  
and a quality of being "out of time", a more  
universal urban condition.

The short film, *Blacktop: A Story of the Washing  
of a School Play Yard* (1952),<sup>2</sup> the second made  
by the Eameses, explores the abstract beauty  
of soapy water washing over a schoolyard. It  
won an award at the 1954 Edinburgh Interna-  
tional Film Festival, and has been categorized as  
one of their "toy films",<sup>3</sup> where they focused on  
and respected everyday, often overlooked

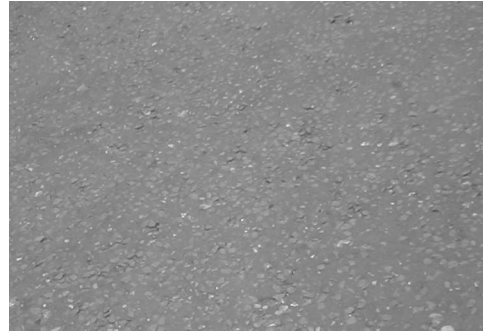


Figure 1 ????

subjects, for what they were, whether machine  
or craft based. In some ways they have been  
seen as working as scientists, with a sort of  
sophisticated play method. Charles Eames has  
been quoted: "They're not experimental films,  
they're not really films. They're just attempts to  
get across an idea."<sup>4</sup> Recent discussions on the  
role of asphalt as a significant process and  
component of modernization and being funda-  
mental to underlying realities of contemporary  
North American landscape/urbanism, reveal  
that the period of the 1950s was significant.  
The 1956 US Federal Highway Act, President  
Eisenhower's "palliative" for the nation,<sup>5</sup> was  
the significant moment of infrastructural in-  
itiative that arguably established twentieth  
century patterns of mobility and urban devel-  
opment through vast swathes of blacktop  
laying, a "continental seamlessness".<sup>6</sup> There is  
evidence of the Eames's interest in the image  
and possibilities of new roads and inter-  
changes.<sup>7</sup> An engagement with photographing  
more natural ground conditions, for instance  
the tides and reflections near their Case Study  
home that they built in 1949, is another visual  
foundation for the film. The Los Angeles  
context itself has an ambiguous urbanity,  
defined both by the dramatic natural topo-  
graphy of its land and by the asphalt networks

of its urban road systems. "Los Angeles is the prototype for any city built by any people from anywhere, who have been removed from their native constraints."<sup>8</sup>

In this essay I suggest that the idea they were aiming to get across in this film was a blurring between natural conditions and an artificiality of ground, where processes of erosion, movement, pattern, reflection and resistance are common to both. The intimate scale of the film, which has a particular effect on the senses, furthermore relates to an idea of a potentially positive individual engagement with what seems at first glance to be incomprehensible, overwhelming and ubiquitous. This echoes the Eames's attitude to the intrinsic human potential of mass produced industrial processes and products. I dwell on a close reading of the film, *Blacktop: A Story of the Washing of a School Play Yard* (1952), as an example of a multimodal representation of the urban everyday as both materialized space and event in time. Visual and aural techniques of intensification and variation in the context of 16 mm film enable exploration of intimacy in relation to the urban, and suggest an urbanism of heightened sensation, augmented in the imagination with qualities of sound, touch, taste and smell.

### Proximity: Urban Close-up

It has been pointed out that *Blacktop* was a "live action-extension of the [still photographic] studies of the seashore Charles made in his first years in California".<sup>9</sup> Seeing "ordinary things afresh—to offer a new vision of an everyday object or event",<sup>10</sup> is evidenced in these photographic studies, and in the still and moving images with which they self-consciously mediated their creative work, moving from personal documentation of fresh experiences

to heightened recordings of places, scenarios and objects they made.<sup>11</sup> Textures of water and sand, as part of the Palisades context setting sequence, are seen as a preoccupation in the close-up footage of water lapping in their 1955 film, *House: After 5 years of Living*. They had an interest in how, as well as what the eye saw, and in recording images. "You must be committed to the subject, to the discipline of the concept involved, not to the medium. In the process you may make a good film."<sup>12</sup> The lingering, focused gaze of the filmmaking in *Blacktop* mediates and translates an everyday experience of urban space, through manipulation of light and dark contrasts, limited colour palette, low ground shots and close-up aerial viewpoint, cropping of images to dislocate view from urban context, and choreographed cutting overlaid on the nine main canon sequences of the musical score.

### Light/Dark

The film opens with a dark background, titles and a painted white line crossing (initial *aria*) and ends with a black screen and title (final *aria de capo*), suggesting a cyclical structure also argued to be implicit in Bach's composition.<sup>13</sup> In the first variation, an initially dry crunchy ground is presented. Lines of blacker, almost oily water approach and are tracked across the frames. After the initial low ground view, it is unclear whether we are looking at a wall or ground or other surface. We then see a close-up of a feather in water, fixing a scale, orientation and time of day—the fall of shadow and direction of wind position this on the ground, echoed by a subsequent leaf sequence. The transparency to opacity of the washing shifts focus between the blacktop ground and the applied material of the water, the interplay of the two elements again echoed as canon

260 and bass in the musical variations. Imperfec-  
 265 tions of the asphalt ground and interruptions  
 270 such as leaves, excess dollops of blacktop and  
 painted line markings return us to the  
 particularity of the schoolyard and its seasonal  
 physical context. The intensity of highlighted  
 sun sparkling on the surface of the water in the  
 second half of the film recalls the “glistening”  
 Calvino describes, capturing properties of the  
 sun, and perhaps positions this as cinemato-  
 graphy of the Los Angeles “sunshine” rather  
 than “noir” mythologies as set out by Mike  
 Davies.<sup>14</sup>

#### View(point)

275 Positioning the camera either as a low ground  
 view or a close-up aerial view creates an  
 intimacy, an effect that the viewer is close to  
 and immersed in the subject: blacktop, water,  
 280 soapiness, line markings, mimicking a brush/  
 flow of water on the school play yard surface.  
 The proximity of the camera to the subject  
 maintains the possibility for abstractions to  
 occur where scale is ambiguous or irrelevant.  
 285 The markers of smallness—leaf, feather,  
 painted number, line thickness, lichen—present  
 the film as a close-up study of these objects as  
 players on the school play yard stage. They are  
 often stilled as the consistency and movement  
 290 of water and soap flows over. The camera’s  
 construction of a relationship between the  
 choreographed act of washing and the viewer  
 makes this an intimate urban portrait. The  
 almost microscopic visual and material focus,  
 295 however, often shifts to a sensation of a  
 panoramic or satellite view, particularly in the  
 final frames of the film. An interest in the view  
 from above is evident in the later Moscow  
 World Fair Interchange images, although set in  
 300 oversized rear view mirror shaped screens,  
 and most prominently in *Powers of Ten*.<sup>15</sup> The

aligning of eye-view with new technology  
 (camera, satellite camera, microsurgery scop-  
 ing) distances the viewpoint from the bodily  
 experience, as well as offering a new, mediated  
 305 and almost disembodied way of seeing the  
 ground. In *Blacktop*, each musical variation  
 incorporates at least one frame that swirls,  
 swoops, pans almost parallel with the ground.  
 310 Usually the camera follows the flow of water,  
 but sometimes it alights on a line marking, or  
 even retreats to track against the flow.

#### Cutting/cropping

As self-taught filmmakers, they used a 16 mm  
 Cine-special camera where adjusting parallax  
 was technically tricky. Therefore, cropping  
 avoided unnecessarily distracting distortions.  
 320 They were concerned with the method’s  
 relationship to the concept—the way the  
 camera was used, the relationship between  
 human and technological eyes. In filmmaking  
 they found characteristics that they aimed to  
 325 explore in their contemporary furniture design  
 and other areas of work particularly related to  
 the performance of materials: for instance a  
 poured, formed material under heat being  
 moulded, stretched, formed into a useable  
 330 product (Plywood Chair, designed 1945-46,  
 Wire Mesh Chair, designed 1951-53, Lounge  
 Chair designed 1956-58).<sup>16</sup> In these, “there is  
 apt to be nothing self-conscious about the use  
 of materials”. Their work in film and graphics  
 335 has been seen as a fusion of the folkloric and  
 mass-manufactured, concerned with relation-  
 ships between the everyday and the designed.

The cinematography of the film can be  
 340 analysed in terms of the dislocation of the  
 subject from its setting. The eye of the camera  
 enables a translation, a displacement of one  
 very particular situation, from documentation

to distillation of an idea. The film opens with a low ground view that contextualizes, before moving to increasingly close-up images that disconnect from context. This device is used in later variation sequences, often when a “subject” is introduced (lichen, fence, sun) and then zoomed into to become increasingly abstract and dislocated. Snatches of the framed and cropped particularity of a Los Angeles’ neighbourhood school play yard enable it to register as peripheral context, yet simultaneously suggest a much more universal urban situation, “out of” everyday time, “any city built by any people from anywhere”. Dualities of fixed/moving elements are played with when the camera fixes on surface ground (for instance a line marking) and the flow over is exaggerated; when focused on the patterns of the water, the blacktop texture appears to dissolve and become immaterial. The Eameses later experimented with rapid-cutting and other film techniques such as stop motion and “hyper-warp” speed (*Eames Lounge Chair*, 1954).

### Pacing/Sequencing

The 30 aural variations each correlate to 2 to 3 visual frames. Each canon sequence is echoed with a visual sequence of between 5 and 14 cuts. There are some cuts which are very pronounced and aural breaks usually coincide with a sustained gaze on a lingering visual image. In other situations, there is a fading and overlay that enables a subtle shift in direction and scale. The genre pieces of the musical variations generally are visually faster, following water in various directions and angles across the frame, and crossing and colluding with various white and yellow painted markings—lines, numbers, boxes—of the blacktop. The camera effects perhaps implicitly mimic the harpsichord player’s hand movements.<sup>17</sup> There

is an increasing soapiness (although not increasing dirt) evident as the film develops, with a range of patterns, flows and dissipations. The success of the abstraction enables the viewer’s imagination to drift between perceiving what is seen in the sprawling soapiness at a scale of almost microscopic, cellular quality, to vastly oceanic satellite scale, a theme the Eameses would return to in *Powers of Ten*. The shifts in scale set up an ambiguity of time span—nanosecond to light years—and at other times the image of almost glacial flow suggests the formation of the earth itself. Towards the end, the predominant blackness with white traces is reminiscent of an image of outer space.

### Flattening

Of course, film noir remained an ideologically ambiguous aesthetic that could be manipulated in dramatically different ways. Thus Howard Hanks chose to flatten the deep shadows of *The Big Sleep*...into an erotic ambience for Bogart and Bacall<sup>18</sup>

If people would only realize that they have the real stuff in their head, in their backyards, their lives would be richer. They are afraid to get involved.<sup>19</sup>

*Blacktop* focuses on the everyday public spaces of playgrounds, parks, allotments that operate at a neighbourhood scale in urban territory. The subject was perhaps chosen as a study of the “real stuff” Charles Eames refers to above. Drawing the viewer closer to the subject is a means of generating involvement. As the film primarily aims to heighten in the cinematography, there is a saturation of the subject, a high overhead light that denies shadows and



which can also allow it to be read as an intensified, flattened condition. Before the lichen sequence at the end of the film, there is a tantalizing shadowy glimpse of the filmmaker.

The deliberate absence or emptiness of activity other than washing in this urban representation draws the viewer/listener to consider afresh a marginal, hidden aspect of collective everyday neighbourhood use, to “become involved” in this situation to some extent. However, its main recurrent component is the composite material, blacktop, which is usually asphalt concrete used for the construction of pavements, highways and parking lots. A material layer usually 50 to 75 mm deep laid hot and viscous on bases of hardcore, it is usually chosen for its durability to withstand heavy loads, its wear and tear, its relative ease of application and its ability to withstand external changes in temperature and applied road markings. The main constructional precision lies in its subtle falls—cambers—grading to drainage channels and maintaining an even consistency. The blackness, of course, absorbs heat and light, and is effectively seamless. This smoothness can crack or be ruptured, but remedial re-laying of layers is relatively easy and low-tech. It can be patched, new “seams” fused in, and objects anchored into it. Pierre Bélanger has related its functional dependency “on the singular continuity of a horizontal surface” with recent conceptualizations of landscape urbanism characterised by field and matrix conditions.<sup>20</sup> It is a material fundamental to the particular history of urbanism in the United States, where its physical continuity across different regional conditions allows consistency of connections enabling speed and uniformity. In the film we switch from a grainy, grey, dusty surface to a dissolved tar-like substance (its essential condition?) to a thick material im-

printed with imperfections, traces and distinct applied markings.

A homogenous skin, a smoothing that enables more efficient flow and movement—of people, cars, communications, goods—is a counter-intuitive treatment of the earth. What is subterranean is suppressed and covered: specific ground conditions, whether porous or clogging, relatively static or volatile (as in the western US seaboard) containing aquifers, wells, minerals, oil, piped infrastructure, a probability of rupture. Where pieces of building or structure from above meet the blacktop there is often no harmonious connection or articulation, but a disruption or rupture leaving traces of brutal collision. The wire mesh fence is the only vertical element in the film fixed into the blacktop, its metallic twists suggesting a precision and piercing contrasting with the heat and shock absorbing asphalt. In more mythological interpretations a black solidified land wash, as the water appears to be at times in the film, could be read as indicative of source, cosmic origins, replenishment from the earth, connection to the gods of nature held in place through the manifestation of a sacred pool, renaissance grotto, city fountain, a place of metamorphosis and transformation.<sup>21</sup> Blacktop synthesises: both literally as a material, and metaphorically as an urban idea.

The Eameses were concerned with “object integrity” and the particularity of material qualities of objects for use. *Blacktop* literally focuses on the surface of the school play yard and what it seems to become in contact with water; another poured condition, and other objects carried by the flow. Relatively few joints or interruptions give it a sense of being scaleless and potentially infinite. The famous parking lot Nolli plan of Robert Venturi, Denise Scott

- ① Brown and Steve Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972) was later to graphically capture this sense of public yet placeless ground, a material phenomena as a register of urbanism.

### Heightening

Isura, city of the thousand wells, is said to rise over a deep subterranean lake ... The city's gods, according to some people, live in the depths, in the black lake that feeds the underground streams. According to others, the gods live in the buckets that rise ... as they appear over the edge of the wells ... in the reservoirs perched on stilts over the roofs, in the slender arches of the aqueducts, in all the columns of water.<sup>22</sup>

The literally often overlooked surface of the ground and its ubiquity implicitly extends this urban space/event to other hidden spaces and times in the city "out of hours" or beneath the surface. It is assumed that the time of day for washing in the local neighbourhood playground is early or late: not interfering with school playtime, and when the temperature is perhaps a little cooler, the asphalt less hot than midday time, the air quieter, the soapy odour more transient; yet the high overhead light of the film suggests otherwise. Removing real time from the film allows other senses such as touch (cool water, mushy wet leaf) to synthesize and interrelate in the imagination, at least to be heightened at various points in the music. It also excludes live sound recording, and therefore heightens a visual effect of abstraction, pattern, form, statement, variation, juxtaposition, overlay, collage. The Eameses used tactics of overload related to the fundamental idea they were exploring in a piece of work, most notably in multi-media installations.

In the film, the generic surface of blacktop becomes centre stage as the materialization of water meeting ground, where the subterranean depths of water's origins are traditionally celebrated, manipulated and manifest symbolically. Seepages, imperfections, and implicit dark depths below recall the staged contest and required mediation between natural unruliness and civilized artifice. Of course, blacktop itself is a poured surface, a solidified wash over the earth. The washing of the Pacific tide onto the coastal shore of the United States is a clear association, and the film's subject emphasizes the transience of this constructed, choreographed act of washing. It resonates with personal, typically domestic acts of washing, yet also transcends this through the music suggesting physical and mental refreshment.

The *Goldberg Variations*<sup>23</sup> are an example of the purer musical forms Johannes Sebastian Bach devoted himself to at the end of his life, where form and contrapuntal texture were central, and Bach was rigorous with contrapuntal standards and knowledge.<sup>24</sup> Counterpoint sets up distinct melodic lines at the same time, and canons used in counterpoint need to be composed to laws of harmony. The canonic programme of the *Goldberg Variations* have been described as "virtuosic".<sup>25</sup> and arguably dramatize the separation of mind from body, spirit from matter. Counterpoint in the early eighteenth century was understood in its purest form as "celestial arithmetic", and although the *Goldberg Variations* is a secular work, the piece can be interpreted as being structured around western biblical numerology.<sup>26</sup> Counterpoint was saturated with social, theological and political meaning in the eighteenth century, used as a way of contemplating death and investigating wider connections governing the universe.<sup>27</sup> The Eameses can hardly have chosen a more intense score,

particularly as interpreted by Wanda Landowska's playing with "high drama and swirling emotion".<sup>28</sup> The presence of the reflected sun increases as the film develops and re-iterates a sensation of heightening: from superficial sparkling, to overexposed corner whiteness, to central burn-out focus in the last variation.

Examples of urban events becoming stage-managed theatre productions—a different sort of heightening—can be seen in *Paris Plage*, a project also predicated on the enhancement of some aspects and the critical exclusion of others.<sup>29</sup> The Eameses echo Bach's structure of nine sequences with distinct openings (acts): wet on dry, soapiness, over yellow line, within lines, playing sparkling sun, dissipated soap and accumulation, lichen/interruption, flowing through fence, sun finale.

### Overlay

Of all the films, *Blacktop* is the one most orthodoxly in the mode of the short "art film". Its main appeal lies in the rare visual poetry of abstract patterns changing in time to Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. The Eames stated that their aim in making it was "to see what happened when you put one variation **over** another; visual form over musical ones, and the result was quite extraordinary."<sup>30</sup>

I don't really believe we overload, but if that is what it is, we try to use it as a way that heightens the reality of the subject, and where, if the viewer is reduced to only a sampling, that sampling will be true to the spirit of the subject.<sup>31</sup>

The main action of the film—washing—demonstrates the Eames's consistent preoccu-

pation with the everyday, and with relationships between design, production and use. Bach, in his inclusion of the final *quodlibet* in the *Goldberg Variations*, a folk melody, "Cabbages and Beets", connects the earthly with its celestial potentiality. The imagined regular cleaning of this schoolyard is an activity with an imagined cast of characters: the school children and teachers using the yard, cleaners, water supply, passers-by. Props are the asphalt, water, soap, line markings, fences of the yard, sun, growing and found objects drifting with or disturbing the flow. And, of course, this imaginary cast is overshadowed by the filmmakers (Charles and Ray Eames), washer (Don Albinson), composer (Johannes Sebastian Bach), musician (Wanda Landowska).

However, the film is clearly presented as "A Story ...", rather than solely being an artwork. Certainly the film is a performance, edited to exclude sounds of actual brushing, swishing, slopping, buckets banging, bodies working. It is as composed as a fiction with micro narratives—wet on dry, the obstructive dollop, the filtering lichen, the channelling line markings, the playful sun. The most descriptive and least monochrome sequences such as the soapy water trickling through a patch of lichen, itself colonizing some yellow markings on the blacktop, and a corner of a galvanized metal fence post and wire mesh fence registering a rare view of the overall act of washing, emerge in the second half of the film. The final sequences return to the abstract, almost pointillist dissolving whiteness of the soapy water; a roughness of the blacktop obviously brushed when laid, with the play of light on and between water and ground surfaces also becoming a participant. Overall the narrative action is "cleaning": the beginning a dirty surface; the middle a fusion of water, soap, enlivened ground; the end a cleaned play yard re-connected with the sky and able to be fully used and enjoyed.

As the spreading-apart of the musical intervals develops over the course of the film, there is an increasing visual separation of elements. Sometimes this is pronounced, where soapy islands appear to float over their context. The film ends in shadowy, leafy stillness. The act of putting one element over another is of course implicit in both the visual thread (water and soap over asphalt, sand over hot asphalt to create blacktop<sup>32</sup>) and the aural thread (canon melody over bass, counterpoint). It is also present in the cinematography, where frames are occasionally faded together to maintain the subject yet enable a shift in tone. While a superimposition can usually be identified, the implied philosophical renewal of the musical cycle and the potentially repetitive act of washing suggest that the overlay and underlay both have equal significance, enabling an ambiguity of reading of one through the other; a dual-modality of reading and representation. The film offers a "place full of time"<sup>33</sup> in Richard Sennet's terms, full of "narrative beginnings" and "weak borders", which has not only distinct material qualities but distinct organic and temporal ones. The conceptualising and conditioning of this urban surface sheds light on a sensed urban materiality.

## Conclusion

The film, *Blacktop: A story of the washing of a schoolyard* (1952), creates a sophisticated space

for the material and narrative imagination, provoking an unexpected involvement of the viewer with the urban everyday through a flattening and heightening of the visual and the aural. The proximity of image to subject, and attentiveness to the film as a close-up, allows small elements to acquire increased significance. The Eameses believed that the everyday object or moment (whether chair, act of washing or outdoor space), if well designed or considered, can have a larger impact on use, wider interrelations of society and environment. Overlaying the visual and the aural enables escape from mundanity through the form and rhythm of the composed music—overloads of variations that are composed to create a harmonious whole. The generic, yet quintessentially modern urban surface, brought to attention as the subject of the film, gains an urban potency as the flattened ground where gathering, play, maintenance takes place, and also as the backdrop to beautiful patterns of the flows and qualities of water; soap, interplaying with light and music. The qualities of the surrounding environment, the temperature of the air, of the water; the implicitly tactile material qualities of surfaces and edges of the playground are closely observed, and represented as having the potential to offer delight, beauty, and surprise in use. This staged washing of a public backyard of Los Angeles is made both beautifully timeless and "full of time" through a creative intensification and created intimacy.

## Notes

② 1. Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, London: Vintage Classics, 1972, p. 49.

2. Charles and Ray Eames, *The Films of Charles and Ray Eames*, California: DVD The Eames

Office, MM Image Entertainment Inc., 1989, Volume 2.

3. Paul Schrader, "Poetry of Ideas: The Films of Charles Eames", *Film Quarterly*, 23, 3 (Spring, 1970): 2-19.

4. Paul Schrader uses this quotation as the introduction to his article. He identifies the overarching "ideas" of the Eameses as "time, space, symmetry, topology". Schrader, "Poetry of Ideas", p. 7.

- 775 5. Pierre Bélanger, "Synthetic Surfaces", in Charles Waldheim (ed.), *The Landscape Urbanism Reader*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006. This comprised 43,000 km of a surface network of 24 ft widths comprising two lanes in each direction.
- 780 ③ 6. Bélanger highlights extraordinary material comparisons. This network is equivalent in concrete consumption to 80 Hoover Dams. Bélanger, "Synthetic Surfaces", p. 252.
- 785 ⑥ 7. Schrader "Poetry of Ideas", p. 5, illustrates his article with an image of the 1959 World Fair, Moscow, and the Eames's installation of screens of enlarged aerial views of flyover road interchanges which started the presentation. This draws out a beauty and fluidity, an unexpected viewing, perhaps sharing some of the conception and belief of the highway engineers, a precursor perhaps to visual mappings in James Corner and Alex MacLean, *Taking measures across the American Landscape*, Yale University Press, 2000.
- 790 ④ 8. Charles Eames, interviewed by Paul Schrader. Schrader, "Poetry of Ideas", p. 15.
- 795 ⑦ 9. J. Neuhart, Charles Eames, Ray Eames, M. Neuhart, *Eames Design: The work of the Office of Charles and Ray Eames*, New York: Harry Abrams, 1989, "to record close ups of tide pools and the natural textures of the water and the sand".
- 800 ⑤ 10. Neuhart et al., *Eames Design*.
- 805 11. Over their working partnership of 40 years, they made 80 films and amassed 750,000 images, mostly slides, now held in the Library of Congress, as part of the Eames Office. In a wider context, in the 1950s in the United States television was expanding, and movie cameras becoming available. Being in Los Angeles the Eameses also had contact with studios and the movie industry. Genres such as sponsored films were very popular. In 1959, 54,000 were made in the United States, while just 223 feature films were made. They wrote little about their work and discouraged others to write about them. Paul Schrader's 1970 piece was a rare article published in their lifetime; Neuhart and Neuhart's catalogue of their work 1941-78 was made in collaboration with Ray Eames after Charles' death. Pat Kirkham's *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998, developed a fuller critique of their work, also positioning a feminist critique, drawing out Ray's more marginalized role. "The Eameses believed in hard work rather than inspiration ... they believed that one of life's main objectives was to get as many of the rewards of life from the work that you do" (Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames*, p. 8). Recently Beatriz Colomina has critically looked at their work, the Case study house, and their multi media presentations. An Eames Film Festival, "Design within Reach", was held in the United States in November 2006. A latterly more pronounced preoccupation of the Eames's work was communication, and engagement with the newly emerging US consumer. Kirkham has pointed out that much of their wider film output was in the genre of sponsored films (IBM, Herman Miller, Westinghouse, ABC, Boeing, Polaroid)—*Blacktop* is an exception—and that Charles and Ray Eames's work as communicators and educators was of equal importance to their design and architecture. "Indeed it was their desire to transmit to others their passion for ideas and objects that led them into film, multi-media presentations and exhibition design".
- 820 12. Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames*, p. 8.
- 825 13. David Yearsley, *Bach and the Meanings of Counterpoint: New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 20. "The constant motion of the heavens is thus analogous to the perpetual revolution of the parts of a well-constructed piece of double counterpoint whose inversions mirror the perfection of heaven and provide earthly beings with a glimpse of God's mending order, a prelude to the heavenly concert".
- 830 14. Mike Davies, "Sunshine or Noir?", in *Los Angeles, City of Quartz: Excavating the Future*, London and New York: Verso, 1990, Chapter 1, pp.
- 835 ⑨ 15. Charles and Ray Eames, *Powers of Ten*, original version, 1968, reprinted on DVD in *The Films of Charles and Ray Eames*, Volume 1.
- 840 ⑩ 16. These feature in *The Films of Charles and Ray Eames: S-73 (Sofa Compact)* (1954) Volume 6; *Eames Lounge Chair* (1956) Volume 5; *Fiberglass Chairs* Volume 4; *Kaleidoscope Jazz Chair* (1960) Volume 2.
- 845 ⑪ 17. Angela Hewitt, "[Its character and rhythm are those] of a dignified, stately sarabande, full of tenderness and poise. It is

- 865 <sup>13</sup> highly embellished in the French tradition—meaning that the ornaments are an essential part of the melodic line, not optional extras .... Bach builds a magnificent edifice that is beautifully proportioned and astonishingly varied. There is a strong visual component—thanks to the spectacular hand-crossings—that makes it fascinating to the spectator... It is certainly one of the most therapeutic pieces of music." Variation 13 has been identified as "sublime" and an "emotional turning point", www.goldbergvariations.com.
- 870
- 875 18. Mike Davies, *Los Angeles*, p. 41.
- 880 19. Schrader, "Poetry of Ideas", p. 6. A careful selection with "extra-curricular surprise ... a kind of wide eyed wonder of seeing the culturally disparate together and so happy with each other".
- 885 20. Bélanger, "Synthetic Surfaces", p. 241, refers to "Stan Allen's 'radical horizontal urbanism' ... a vast mat-like field ... a smooth continuous matrix".
- 890 21. See for instance, Suzanne Ewing, "Drama and Reflections: The Nymphaeum of the Villa Giulia, Rome", *Scroope, Cambridge Architecture Journal*, 4 (1992): 41-43.
- 895 22. Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, p. 20.
- 900 <sup>14</sup> 23. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, originally titled "*Aria mit verschiedenen Veränderungen*" [aria with variations], was published first in 1741, although there is evidence that it was taken from one of Bach's 1725 notebooks (Peter Washington, *Bach*, Everyman EMI, David Campbell Publishing Ltd, 1996). It was the fourth in a series Bach called "*Clavier*
- Übung*" [keyboard practice] and was composed for two manual harpsichords. The inscription of a frontispiece says, "composed for connoisseurs, for the refreshment of their spirits". The form of the 30 Variations opens with an *Aria* (statement) and two sections of 30 bars, each repeated. *Variations* then follows the bass line (fundamental bass) with a *Canon* following ascending pattern, a *Genre piece* (baroque dance, fughetta, French overture, ornate aria) an Arabesque, and finally a *Quodlibet* (earthy folk songs "animated rustic feel"). The form is completed by a final *Aria da capo e fine*.
24. Washington, *Bach*, p. 120.
25. Yearsley, *Bach and the Meanings of Counterpoint*, p. 157.
26. Washington, *Bach*, p. 114. The score is structured around the structure of three, symbolizing the trinity. It comprises 30 variations divided into groups of 3; every third (except the last) is a canon, that is, 9 canons (3 x 3). Each canon has two voices and an independent bass. These three voices start at different intervals, with voices gradually spreading apart, the first canon is in unison, the last at the ninth. There are various explanations for the titling of the piece, but there is a sublimity suggested in allusions to Goldberg ["gold mountain"], a small town in Germany that was the site of a gold rush.
27. David Yearsley, "Introduction", in *Bach and the Meanings of Counterpoint*, pp.
28. Washington, *Bach*, p. 141. Wanda Landowska (1879-1959) was one of the great interpreters of Bach and has been credited with being responsible for reviving the harpsichord in the early years of the twentieth century.
29. An urban beach event since 2002, the artifice of the operation was literally stage managed. The designers, Jean Christophe Choblet, a scenographer, and his team, which included sociologists, describe *Paris-Plage*: "The playful, slightly rebellious transfiguration of the space ... The highway became a stage, as if in a theatre. And on that stage people played at 'being at the beach.'" M. de la Pradelle and E. Lallement, "Paris Plage —The City is Ours", in Anderson, Brooks, Gunn, Jones (eds.), "Being Here and Being There: Fieldwork Encounters and Ethnographic Discoveries", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 595 (September 2004): 134-145. So the designers and participants both had to work together to make the idea of the sea present, a state of being at not on the beach. De la Pradelle and Lallement discover in their fieldwork investigations that the willingness of those visiting and participating in *Paris Plage* to be interviewed and photographed demonstrated the consensual understanding that they were participating in a theatrical production. The individuals behaved as actors with a role, rather than as suspicious citizens or individuals. People did what was expected of them, what had been planned. De la Pradelle and Lallement propose that by extension *Paris Plage* is an actualization of a new special city where "every place would belong to everyone". By erasing a critical aspect of the reality of the

developed twentieth century city—cars, expressway link, and critically the feeling of being a constant consumer—they argue that it is possible to overlay a new city of some sort on the edited existing.

30. Schrader, "Poetry of Ideas".

31. Charles Eames in interview, Schrader, "Poetry of Ideas", p. 14.

32. Blacktop (asphalt) is an overlay technique developed by Joseph de Smedt in an 1870 patent (quoted in Bélan-

ger, "Synthetic Surfaces", p. 244): "[T]he surface...is properly graded and I first put a thin layer of hot sand upon it, about half an inch in thickness, and upon this layer of sand I put a layer of hot sand and asphalt, that which was previously mixed, under a comparatively moderate degree of heat, this last layer being about one inch in thickness. Over this layer ... I pass a hot roller; and then apply a thin layer of hot sand, half inch thick, and over the latter a layer, an inch thick ... which is rolled with a hot roller, as

before. This is repeated until the desired thickness for the road or pavement is obtained. By this process or mode of laying, I ... insure that the properties thorough incorporation of the sand and asphalt, and sand layers, so that a homogenous layer is obtained throughout".

33. Richard Sennett, "Places Full of Time", in *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*, WW Norton & Company, 1992, p. 169-202.

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